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# THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSOLATION.

OR

## THE OPERATIONS OF FAITH.

"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house into a land that I will show thee." Thus spoke the Almighty to Abraham, Did he obey? He did. The sacred chronicle says, "*He went out, not knowing whither he went.*" Yes, he forsook his home, his country, the friends of his youth, all the pleasant associations of his early life, and went forth, a pilgrim wanderer; he knew not whither. Henceforth, he must dwell with strangers; he must move through hostile countries; he must be a man, marked by all men as singular and differing from the whole world. Nor could he explain himself so as to be comprehended, because his motives were spiritual, and to an idolatrous world inexplicable.

Abraham's emigration was, therefore, one of the most sublime instances of human reliance on the Divine veracity, recorded in the history of man! God promised him, in his descendants, the possession of Canaan. Without visible proofs, or outward probabilities, relying solely on the promise of God, he took the required steps to inherit the promise. He went fearlessly into hostile nations; he crossed wildernesses without terror; he became a homeless wanderer, yet without any apprehension of want or danger. "I am obeying Jehovah! He will provide! My children shall dwell

in Canaan! I shall have a city out of sight;" was the language of his confiding spirit.

This was true, saving faith—a practical confidence in God. And this is the confidence which every true believer should have in his heavenly Father.

It is a believer's privilege to have *unlimited* and *abiding* confidence in God. He may feel always that, both in things spiritual and temporal, God will do the very best that can be done. He may dismiss *all* distressing fears concerning the present or future. With David he may say of this life and its necessary blessings: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;" and, in obedience to Christ, he may expel trouble from his breast. What Christian can *fear* when Christ so sweetly whispers: "Let not your heart be troubled." "Fear not, little flock" "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

These texts are ample foundations for the strongest confidence. They authorize us to expect sufficient spiritual aid to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil; and they give a pledge that in this life a true Christian shall never suffer *real evil*. He shall have food and raiment, property and blessing, sufficient to enable him to do God's will in the best manner and to gain eternal life.

Our sensitive and selfish natures shrink from afflictions. We look upon them as ghastly spectres or haunting ghosts. Hence, when they enter our habitations and lay our bodies on sick beds; or burn our property, bring confusion upon our business arrangements, and plunge us into a chaos of financial difficulties, and we let our faith sink lower and lower.—Unbelief rises, and we doubt whether God is really doing for us all he has promised to do.

A certain father once took his son to sea. He was a naval officer of some celebrity, and his purpose was to

make his son eminent in the naval service. To accomplish this end, he saw it was necessary to have his son become a thorough seaman. He wished him to understand every part of a sailor's duty.

When the lad went on board his father's ship, he naturally expected some indulgence. The transition from an elegant home, a kind mother, accomplished sisters, to the rough and stormy life of the sailor, was very great. He hoped, therefore, for he knew his father to be kind, to escape the severer duties of his station.

But he was self-deceived. Once at the post of duty, his father made no distinction. In the dark and dreary night, he was ordered aloft with his companions.—Once, when dreadfully sea-sick, he ventured to his father with a request to be excused. "Do your duty, sir!" was the stern reply; and as the boy mounted the giddy mast that night, he, for the first time, doubted his father's love.

Like his young shipmates, he sometimes committed little misdemeanors—he violated some of the minuter rules of naval discipline. "My father is Captain," was his inward thought; "I shall have indulgence."—Again he was deceived. The rebuke upon him fell sterner and more severe than on any other lad. Once more he doubted his father's love.

This lad was of buoyant spirits and of daring mind. He prided himself in feats of skill and courage. One day he climbed the topmast height of the taper mast, and, to the terror even of the sailors, stood upright on the main truck. At that instant, his father came up from the cabin. "See your son, sir!" exclaimed his Lieutenant, pale with fear. One glance of his eye, a sudden rush into the cabin, a moment's time, and that father stood with rifle pointed toward his son, shouting: "Jump over board, sir, or I will shoot you." The boy leaped into the sea and was saved. Not understand-

ing the object of his father, the lad again doubted his father's love.

The cruise of nearly four years was ended and the lad and his father were once more in the halls of their ancestors. The boy had become almost a man. He was skilled in seamanship, and the service could not produce a more skilful and promising young officer than he. In their home, too, the father was as tender and affectionate as he was prior to the cruise. The youth wandered at the mystery of his parent's conduct. Stern and severe at sea, but kind and loving at home: what could be his real character?

The father and son are closeted. "My son," says the father, "you have probably wondered at some parts of my conduct. I compelled you to go aloft when you were sea-sick. I rebuked you severely for your occasional faults. It was painful to me to do these things, but *your interests* required them. I meant, if possible, to make you a brave and finished seaman. The things you felt most keenly about, were the most necessary for your final profit. When I threatened to shoot you as you stood on the main truck, it was to save your life. Had I expostulated a moment you would have fallen. There was no way to save your life but to force you to jump into the sea. I have aimed in all these things to secure your benefit."

The reader can readily imagine that such an explanation would entirely remove the doubts, which the apparently harsh discipline of the father had excited in the son. He would even condemn himself for having doubted at all; and wonder at the mental stupidity which prevented him from entering into his father's wise designs.

Precisely similar are the dealings of God with believers. His children cannot be discovered by any outward provinces; nor distinguished from sinners by *visible* signs of heavenly favor. Nay, they are on the other

hand, often sorely afflicted. A pious Joseph is maligned, persecuted and oppressed; a faithful David is hunted like a beast of prey by his wicked enemies; a resolute Daniel is cast into a den of lions for his faithfulness; a submissive Job is stripped of his precious things and made a spectacle of desolation; a faithful Jeremiah is cast into a pit; a devoted Stephen is given up to the violence of gospel haters; a zealous Paul is compelled to carry a thorn in the flesh, and an affectionate John to be an exile on lonely Patmos.

The key to all this suffering in the disciples of the Saviour is furnished by that apostle who wrote that:—"All these things work together for good to them that love God;" and "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Here we have the solution of these untoward Providences which sometimes successively overtake a pious Christian. God is aiming to make his salvation sure. To him the *present* convenience of the believer is nothing compared to his *eternal* blessedness. The happiness of the disciple *in this life* is not the *end* of God's gracious providences: the *end* with Him in his elevation to glory.

This, then, is one work of faith. To be unmoved, confident and calm in the darkest hour. However severely tried; however storm-tossed, however much threatened with destruction, to indulge no doubt in God. Like a boy at sea who retained his childish buoyancy in the midst of a terrible storm, which strained the ship to the limit of her endurance and made the most practised sailor tremble in expectation of instant death. Seeing him so cool, a sailor said to him, "Are you afraid?"

"No," was his prompt reply.

"But the gale is very terrible," responded the sailor.

"I know it. *But my father's at the helm!*"

Admirable confidence! would that the children of God would always maintain such faith in their father, and learn to say in every conflict and danger, "*My father is at the Helm.*" God is ruler. He is pledged to secure my safety. I cannot suffer real evil."

"*What we know not now we shall know hereafter,*" is an inspired statement. It is true. As the naval officer explained his conduct to his son, so will Jehovah condescend to shew his motives in sending heavy trials on his chosen one. The weeping mother shall know why God took that sweet babe from her breast; the widow shall be satisfied that God was kind in taking away her life's chief delight,—the friend and partner of her youth; the orphan shall understand the cause of his being left to the cold charities of a heartless world; and the merchant shall have the mysteries of his many unforeseen reverses revealed. Wait, then, in faith, dear reader, for the issue of your afflictions. Believe with all your heart that all will terminate well; that when you have overcome and are joined to the hosts of heaven, and think of your bitterest affliction,

"This note above the rest shall swell,  
My Jesus has done all things well."

There will be also a constant necessity in your experience for what I would call a *special faith*. To explain my meaning, let me imagine a young man dependant upon his father. They live together in perfect harmony. The father freely and lovingly furnishes an ample supply for his son's necessities, and the son in return is affectionate, confiding and obedient. He has an unshaken confidence in his father's love and ability. Therefore his mind is untroubled on the question of his earthly subsistence.

But one day, the young man perceives a very fine

opening for himself in business. To enter it, he needs a particular sum of money. He can only obtain it of his father.

"Will my farther furnish me with this money?" would be a first and necessary question in his mind. — To solicit this aid from his father, every reader can at once perceive, requires a special act of mental confidence in the youth. He might doubt his father's disposition to do *that particular favor*, without being at all shaken in his established conviction of that father's love. To solicit it, he must have a special and peculiar belief that he will do *that particular favor*.

So with your faith. While you maintain an abiding belief that God for Christ's sake accepts you now; and that Christ as the administrator of the universe is ruling all terrestrial things for your final profit; you will also require a *special faith*; for victory over peculiar temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil.

Hence, when Paul exhorted believers to lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily beset them, &c., he bade them attempt these things, "*Looking unto Jesus*:" i. e., by exercising an especial faith in him. His own exercises for the removal of that troublesome "*thorn in the flesh*" will illustrate this point. — He had a saving faith when the thorn came. Feeling it to trouble him, he sought God thrice, in believing prayer, to remove it. God heard that request, and answered it too, but not as Paul expected. He said in effect, "I cannot take it away: it is for your profit; but *my grace is sufficient for thee*." Now, when Paul felt this thorn piercing him, he would require a special faith, in addition to that which joined him to Christ; or rather that faith which saved him would require an especial direction. It must believe that this identical affliction was permitted in love, and that the grace of Christ would enable him to bear it.

Effort then, I repeat, is needful. You must have



seasons for silent meditation. You must read what is revealed concerning eternity, and let your mind dwell on the statements of the Bible until they are felt to be realities. Let the Bible lead your mind to Heaven.— Place yourself among its splendors and glories. Yield yourself up to the emotions which they excite. Study them; until your soul flutters its wings as if ready for its instant flight, and, while yet in the body, inspires the spirit of its future home. Do this, and when you go forth to busy life, carry these images with you.— Speak of them to your religious friends, and you will learn to say habitually—

“There is my house and portion fair;  
 My treasure and my heart are there,  
 And my abiding home;  
 For me, my elder brethren stay,  
 And angels beckon me away,  
 And Jesus bids me come.”

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